

FIRE PREVENTION PRACTICE #3-11

September 1, 1991

TO: All Fire Inspection Personnel

FROM: Steve Zaccard, Fire Marshal

SUBJECT: UTILITY SHUT-OFFS - NORTHERN STATES POWER

"THIS PRACTICE IS TO SERVE AS A PROCEDURAL GUIDE FOR YOU TO FOLLOW. EXCEPTIONS TO THIS PRACTICE SHALL BE APPROVED BY THE FIRE MARSHAL THROUGH YOUR SUPERVISOR".

The Saint Paul Legislative Code, Chapter 46, requires utility companies supplying utility services through a single meter, or to dwellings with two or more units which are not individually metered, to post, on or near the front and rear entrances, a notice of intent to discontinue the service for non-payment of utility bills. When the service has been discontinued for a period of thirty (30) days, the utility company is required to send notice of discontinuance, and the reason for it, to Fire Prevention for all buildings required to have a Certificate of Occupancy.

Utility shutoff notices will be entered into the complaint system by Fire Prevention clerks, and complaints will be distributed to the area inspector the following morning. The following action should be take:

RESIDENTIAL:

Electric Shutoffs - Tenant Responsible:

1. Call N.S.P. to verify that service is still off. If it's on, close complaint.
2. If service is off, send orders to tenant to restore electric in 24 hours or vacate unit in ten days.
3. Copy owner on orders. The computerized code will be changed to indicate that if electric service affects electrical-powered fire protection, such as smoke detection, that protection must be restored immediately or the unit vacated. This may be addressed by installing a battery-operated smoke detector in the interim.

When the recheck comes back, check with N.S.P. again to verify whether service has been restored. If service is still off, send letter to tenant with copy to owner, with a 24-hour vacate. Post Condemnation signs on the unit. Make sure your letter and condemnation sign specify the unit number.

4. Reinspect after 24 hours to assure tenant has vacated. Tags should be written to the tenant for occupying a condemned unit under 34.19 (D). Close complaint after tenant has vacated and/or power is on.

Electric Shutoffs - Owner Responsible:

1. Call N.S.P. to verify service is still off. If service is on, close complaint.
2. If service is still off, send orders to owner to restore service in 24 hours or vacate unit in ten days.
3. Same wording will be sent to the owner regarding fire protection devices affected by the electric.
4. When recheck comes back, call N.S.P. to verify that service is still off. If so, send letter to vacate unit in 24 hours. Post condemnation signs on the unit. Make sure letter and condemnation sign indicate the unit number.
5. Reinspect after 24 hours. If unit is not vacant, tag owner under 34.19 (D) for allowing occupancy of a condemned unit. Close complaint after unit is vacant and/or service restored.

Gas Shutoffs:

1. Call N.S.P. to verify if service is still off. If gas shutoff results in no heat, unit must be vacated in 24 hours. This will be handled as a no-heat. Inspector will be paged to notify owner that heat must be restored in 24 hours or unit vacated. Letter will be sent immediately and reinspection will be made in 24 hours to verify compliance. Housing Information Office should be notified to find emergency housing if the tenants need relocating.
2. Gas shutoffs affecting cooking only and not presenting an immediate hazard will be handled as in electric above.

Water Shutoffs:

1. Water shutoffs are a 24-hour vacate. Inspectors will be paged in the field to contact the owner (almost always the responsible party).
2. Send letter #7 with orders to restore or vacate in 24 hours. Post vacate notice for 24 hours.
3. Recheck in 24 hours. Tag owner if service is not restored.
4. Call Housing Information to request assistance for tenants.

COMMERCIAL: (Gas, electric, water)

1. Call N.S.P. to verify that service is still off. If it's back on, close complaint.
2. If service is off, inspector must visit the site to verify whether lack of service has affected life safety systems such as sprinklers, standpipes, exit lighting, fire alarms, smoke detection, etcetera. In food establishments, a determination must be made as to the effect it has on health issues. If life safety or health issues are affected by the lack of service, send orders to owner and/or tenant to restore the service in 24 hours or vacate the premises.

cc: Gary Trudeau, Cindy Menten

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